Helping Schools Enhance Academic Resilience of Latino English Language Learners: A Review of Research

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Abstract

The percentage of Latino English Language Learners (ELLs) has been increasing dramatically during the past ten years. Within the US public school systems, ELLs represent the fastest growing student population. Unfortunately, these students struggle to master academic content since they attend mostly segregated, under-resourced urban schools that have high concentrations of poverty and tend to have a disproportionally high number of teachers who lack the qualifications they need for quality instruction. A wide amount of existing research on ELLs is viewed through the lens of this above mentioned deficit model, but not too much attention has been paid to the “resiliency model” and the Latino ELL students who share a wide range of risk factors but yet manage to perform exceptionally well in the classroom. This review of research article will describe research that illuminates on the many causes of the achievement gap that exists between Latino ELLs and native English speakers but will also identify existing academic resiliency research in the context of the ELL population. Research findings on the enhancement of academic resiliency of ELLs include several school related factors like teacher support, counseling, family support, motivation and a strong bicultural identity. These school related factors can play a major role on improving and even maximizing the academic success of ELL students in the public school setting. This review article will also mention literature on the role that school climate, in itself, plays in fostering the academic resiliency of ELLs and will argue that a positive school climate can promote the social, psychological, and academic well being of the ELL population by creating the resiliency protective factors that can be used against the wide range of risk factors these students face. The review article will ultimately argue that schools can equip themselves with the necessary tools that create the resiliency enhancement of the Latino ELL population.

Keywords: academic resiliency, ELLs, school climate, cultural pluralism

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**A Brief Personal Experience and Memory on What It Feels like to be a Latina English Language Learner in the United States**

I had never seen the runway lights of an airport late at night. I had never been in an airport. At 11-years-old, I looked across this dazzlingly lit open space in Santiago, Chile, filled with red and blue flashing lights and knew some big and drastic changes were about to take hold of my life. I then stared up to look at the night stars I had seen many times before and I recall they were intense and vivid. This completed the moment I needed to say goodbye to my homeland. I somehow understood, at age 11, the severity of what was about to happen. My parents, brothers and I left Chile in early March, 1982 and arrived in the U.S. the following day. Upon arriving, I experienced the bitter snow for the first time and I realized our lives had been turned upside down. It would take a great deal of time, pain, and struggles for me to feel fine and at home again.

One of the first places where I experienced a number of emotional and academic difficulties was school. I was 11 years-old and upon entering the school system, I was no longer a regular student, like I was back in Chile. I was now a new immigrant ELL student. For about a year, I felt depressed, isolated, shunned, and discriminated against. I was so alien to all that was going on around me because I couldn’t communicate or relate to this new, huge and amazing country and to this cultural amalgamation that had welcomed me but at the same time made me feel so different than its people.

I am now a middle school teacher who has never forgotten the immense challenges I faced when I first entered school in the U.S. I now also realize that I had a much easier time succeeding in school than most of the Latino ELLs of today because I had a college educated parent who managed to quickly move up the income brackets and so our poverty was only temporary. Although we were never wealthy, we were at least member of the lower middle class. I also had a mom who let me know from a very young age that attending college was non-negotiable and necessary for success in life. Now, close to 30 years after my US arrival and after 10 years of experience teaching in an urban school district and a Ph.D. student, I have become very interested in research related to Latino ELL students who manage to succeed academically despite all of the challenges they face. I am fascinated and want to learn more from and about these “resilient” students who manage to succeed and defy the odds against a number of detrimental effects related to being placed under the ELL umbrella. A wide amount of existing research on ELLs is viewed through the lens of a deficit model and much attention has not been paid to the “resiliency model” and the Latino ELL students who share a wide range of risk factors, but yet manage to perform exceptionally well in the classroom.

**A brief definition of ELLs**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 defines ELLs as students who meet the following criteria:

1. Age 3-21
2. Enrolled or preparing to enroll in elementary or secondary school.
3. Not born in the US or native language is not English.
4. From an environment where a language other than English has a significant impact on their level of English proficiency.
5. Migratory and comes from an environment where English is not the dominant language.
6. Has difficulty in speaking, reading and writing or understanding the English language to the point that it will deny the individual the ability to meet the state’s proficiency level of achievement and the ability to achieve in classrooms where English is the language of instruction. (NCLB, 2001, Title IX).

**Definition of academic resiliency**

One of the most commonly described definitions of academic resiliency involves a student’s capacity to adapt and thrive even under some major adversities. Researchers Masten, Best & Garmezy (1990) define resiliency as “a process of or capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances.”( p.459). According to Waxman, H.C., Gray, J.P., & Padron, Y.N. (2003), resilient students are: “students who succeed in school despite the presence of adverse conditions.” (p.1). Rutter (1990) suggests that the term resilience refers to “... the positive pole of the ubiquitous phenomenon of individual difference in people's responses to stress and adversity” (p.181). Goodwin (2007) describes what academically resilient students look like in a PowerPoint presentation titled “Enhancing Academic Resiliency” which was presented in a conference in Addison, Texas. The descriptions according to Goodwin (2007)are:

* Adaptable temperament; flexible; tolerates ambiguity
* Optimistic
* Anticipates problems; solves problems logically
* Creative solutions to challenges
* Positive self-esteem
* Sees humor in self and life situations
* Curious; learns from experience
* “Reads” people well
* Durable and independent
* Internal locus of control
* Achievement-oriented attitude

Benard, (1991, 1993) M.S.W. has published extensively on resiliency and says that it is

very important for educators to know that everyone has innate resilience. This creates optimism and possibility, which is an essential component in building motivation. Benard (1991, 1993) says that this understanding creates one of the major protective factors that enhance and foster resilience -- positive expectations. When teacher or practitioner’s positive expectations are internalized by youth, it motivates and enables them to overcome risks and adversity.

Benard has found that there are four personal characteristics that resilient children typically display:

• social competence,

• problem-solving skills,

• autonomy, and

• a sense of purpose.

**Adversities faced by Latino ELLs in today’s schools**

POVERTY

The percentage of Latino ELLs has been increasing dramatically during the past ten years. Within the US public school systems, ELLs represent the fastest growing student population. (Cawthon, 2010). Yet, along with other students of color, ELLs are currently attending our country’s most poor, urban schools. Researchers like Waxman (1992) say that solely attending a school that is considered an "at risk" school can be considered an adverse situation. Many of the threatening and challenging circumstances faced by ELLs are related to poverty. Latino ELLs face serious inequities, as compared to native English learners when it comes to the education they receive in schools. (Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L. 2008; Gutierrez & Jaramillo, 2006, Spring, 2009; Berliner, 2009).

“Because America’s schools are so highly segregated by income, race, and ethnicity, problems related to poverty occur simultaneously, with greater frequency, and act cumulatively in schools serving disadvantaged communities. These schools therefore face significantly greater challenges than schools serving wealthier children, and their limited resources are often overwhelmed.” (Berliner, 2009, p.1). In addition to the fact that ELLs attend mostly segregated urban schools that have high concentrations of poverty, these very schools also tend to be under-resourced (Gutierrez & Jaramillo, 2006; Berliner, 2009; Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L. 2008). Researchers Gordon & Song(1994) state that certain risk factors, like poverty can reliably predict certain negative outcomes for youth and claim that poverty has been identified as a specific predictor for criminality. (Gordon & Song, 1994).

Berliner (2009) refers to six key out of schools factors (OSFs) related to poverty that he says can be responsible for seriously challenging the health, learning opportunities, and academic success of students who live in poverty, like the majority of Latino ELLs attending our public schools. The OSFs Berliner describes are: (1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often as a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity; (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; and (6)neighborhood characteristics. Berliner (2009) claims that these OSFs are related to a host of poverty-induced physical, sociological, and psychological problems that students often bring to school, ranging from attention disorders, neurological problems to excessive absenteeism, linguistic underdevelopment, and oppositional behavior.

SHORTAGE OF CERTIFIED AND QUALIFIED TEACHERS

The Majority of Latino ELLs also attend some of the poorest urban schools in the country which tend to have a disproportionally high number of teachers who lack the qualifications they need for quality instruction. (Uriarte, Tung, Lavan & Diez, 2010; Tung, 2008; Hanawar, 2009; Sylva Mangiante, 2011). According to a report published in 2008 by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Act, New York State had one certified English as a second language teacher for every 116 ELL students. That lags behind other states, such as Washington state and Massachusetts, where there is one certified ESL teacher for every 76 and 66 ELLs respectively. (Tung, 2008).

NCLB AND CURRENT TESTING PRACTICES

In addition, the current NCLB testing practices are further complicating the inequities ELLs are faced with because testing preparation time is taking away from valuable classroom learning experiences... (Gutierrez & Jaramillo, 2006; Crawford, 2009; Zehr, 2009). “Their inferior educational experience is further complicated by less instructional time devoted to meeting their educational needs, assessments that do not adequately measure their learning needs and achievement…” (Gutierrez & Jaramillo, 2006, p.181). Cawthon (2010) says that “Many who are former LEP’s (Limited English Proficiency) come with a history of struggle and academic challenges faced by the fact that they had been simultaneously learning English and academic content.” ( Cawthon, 2010, p.7).

According to researchers like Crawford (2009) and Walsh (2009), the NCLB legislation is largely failing ELLs because it includes arbitrary achievement targets, invalid assessments and contradicts the basic principals established by Lau v. Nichols (1974), a supreme court decision that demanded a better and more adequate education for ELLs. “We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experience wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful,” were words said by Justice William O. Douglas. (Walsh, 2009). The only ELL students who are kept out of testing are the ones who have been in the country for one year or less. This means that those who have been in the country for only two years and who may have had their first exposure to the English language during that time are expected to take the test and compete against the scores of the fluent, native English speakers. Simply put, says Crawford (2009) “when children don’t understand the language of the test, they are unable to demonstrate what they have learned.”

The Research Center (2009) says there is also a significant national achievement gap between English-learners and all public school students on both national and state-developed tests. Only 9.6 percent of 4th and 8th grade ELLs scored “proficient” or higher in mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2007, compared with 34.8percent of students as a whole. The gap was similar in 2007 NAEP in reading: 5.6 percent of ELLs scored proficient compared to national average of 30.4 percent (Research Center, 2009). In fact, in some cases and at some grade levels, the achievement gap between the ELLs and the native speakers has widened. (Wentworth, Pellegrin, Thompson & Hakuta, 2010).

According to Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L. (2008), there are four critical issues that ELLs face:

1. The programs that are in place in school districts are not tailored to meet their linguistic and academic needs.
2. Assessments are inadequate.
3. There is a lack of adequate resources to suit their needs.
4. There are not enough efforts to involve their parents and their communities in their education.

DISSONANCE BETWEEN RESEARCH AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Another set of adversities faced by Latino students in today’s schools is dissonance among classroom practice, educational research and recent policies that affect their ways of learning. The inequities and legal mandates of the last twenty years are clear evidence of the great dissonance that exists today between educational research on ELLs and the policies that are affecting classroom practice. Since the early 1980’s, but especially since the enactment of NCLB, the majority of the classroom instruction that serves ELLs in our country’s schools is not at all linked to the overwhelming research that exists on how to best educate this population. (Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L., 2008).

“The conflicting nature of research policy and teaching practices is responsible for much of the miseducation of ELLs in the US and their failure in school. (Garcia et. al, 2008, p.6)

The one key and evident example of dissonance between current classroom practice and existing research is the current programs that are being used to instruct ELLs. The most common way of instruction is English As a Second Language programs (ESL). ESL programs emphasize or solely use English as the mode of instruction while neglecting the students’ first language. According to Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L.(2008), ELLs are not being provided with educational programs that are tailored to meet their linguistic and academic needs and there is an overwhelming lack of recognition of these students’ evolving bilingualism and the importance of the use of their home language. Research has “consistently found that there is a cross-linguistic relationship between the students’ first and second language and proficiency in the first language is related to academic achievement in the second language.” (Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. & Falchi, L., 2008, p.26).

Another example of the dissonance that exists between research and policy and practice is the time limits that ELLs are being given to master the language. For example, California’s Proposition 227 expects their students to be ready for the mainstream classrooms after only a year of English exposure. (Wentworth, L., Pellegrin, N., Thompson, K., Hakuta, K., 2010). Most of the research on the timeframe that it takes for ELLs to acquire proficiency indicates that the proficiency depends on a number of factors which include the age of the students at the time he/she is exposed to the second language, the quality of the education that the student received in their first language, and the type of instruction that is provided to them for acquiring the second language. (Samway & McKeon, 2007). Research indicates that it is virtually impossible to acquire proficiency in the second language within only a year of practice. However, most importantly, language acquisition is not a “one size-fits all” type of process and, as mentioned above, the time it takes students to learn the second language varies depending on several variables. An expectation of proficiency or mainstream readiness after only one year is not supported by research findings.

**Important classic longitudinal resiliency research**

The terminology and science of resilience and risk has emerged mainly from health sciences and particularly from investigations in psychopathology (Keyes, 2004). Some pioneering psychologists like Werner, 1984, 1992; Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen (1984) and Rutter (1979) were among the first to bridge the study of risk and resilience to bring this dual focus into the science of human development. (Keyes, 2004).

Werner (1992) studied a large youth sample from Kauai, Hawaii, beginning with the children’s births in 1955. Out of the 660 children who were identified, more than 200 were found with multiple risk factors including family instability, socio-economic status, poor emotional support within family, and little educational stimulation. The participants were followed from birth to age 32. Werner (1984 ) says protective factors present in the lives of resilient children include personal temperaments that elicit positive responses from family members and strangers, close bonds with caregivers during the first year of life and in middle school and adolescence active engagement in acts that required helpfulness.

Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen (1984) studied about 200 children from urban areas in the United States, as well as children with congenital heart defects and children who were physically disabled. Competence was used as the dependent variable in this study and multiple measures were used, including classroom behavior, academic success and interpersonal competence. Also, Rutter (1979) studied a sample from Isle of Wigh in England and inner London children. These children had experienced risk factors related to parental and marital discord, overcrowding or large family size, parental criminality, maternal psychiatric disorder, or placement in government care. Rutter (1979) found that a single risk factor or stressor did not have a significant impact. However, combinations of two or more stressors did diminish the likelihood of positive outcomes for these children. Also, any additional stressors increased the impact of all other existing stressors. These classic resiliency studies identified protective factors that buffered the impact of the stressors. (Rak & Patterson, 1996).These protective factors include both personality traits of the subjects themselves and also environmental protective factors which combined to create positive outcomes in some of the children.

**resiliency research and ELLs**

A wide amount of existing research on ELLs is viewed through the lens of the deficit model, but not too much attention has been paid to the “resiliency model” and the Latino ELL students who share a wide range of risk factors but yet manage to perform exceptionally well in the classroom. Nelson Reynoso (2008) recently conducted qualitative, grounded theory research based on six case studies of academically resilient student’s native of the Dominican Republic who were attending a community college in New York City. These students experienced a number of adversities dealing with immigrating to a new country, the language barrier and other somber circumstances. Reynoso (2008) found that these community college students faced challenges related to difficulties with mastering academic language, poverty, limited English proficiency, and insufficient instructional support at school and at home. In addition, these students also faced social and psychological challenges that are related specifically to their immigration experience. These included loneliness, separation, immigration status, and discrimination. The research yielded a number of “protective factors” which the students themselves described as contributing to their ultimate success in school. These protective factors emerged in seven categories. : “a) faculty support, b)tutoring support, c)counseling support, d) peer support, e)family support f) self-motivation and g) bicultural identity development.” (p.393).

Research indicates that ELLs who have been designated by researchers as being academically resilient tend to have strong bi-cultural identities (Reynoso, 2008; Weaver, 2010). Also, that structure, an appropriate education program, and positive guidance and socialization with adults are crucial components in building resiliency in at-risk youth. (Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz, D'Ambrosio, 2001 **&** Brendtro and Cunningham, 1998).

An ethnographic study conducted in a high school in Colorado describes what Chicano students perceived as critical in their ability to succeed. Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar (2004) concluded that teachers who practice humanizing pedagogies are instrumental in creating or fostering academic resiliency in these students. As described by the Chicano students

themselves, the key elements that fostered their academic resiliency were:

Respeto (respect)

Confianza (mutual trust)

Consejos (verbal teachings, advice) and

Buen ejemplos (exemplary models) (Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004 p.36)



Chicano students in this study described the importance of feeling comfortable, valued, trustworthy and that it was extremely important for them to perceive that time was taken from academic tasks to build trust and caring for each other.

Gonzalez & Padilla (1997) are authors of an often mentioned research involving resilient Mexican American students at the high school level. This study looked at 133 resilient and 81 nonresilient Mexican American high school students from a population of 2,000 from three high schools in California. Resilient students were described as those who attained mostly A’s in report cards and nonresilient students as those who attained mostly below D’s in report cards. One finding was that the resilient students, as compared to the nonresilient had higher perceptions of family and peer support, teacher feedback, positive ties to school, and peer belonging.

Another qualitative study conducted by Feinstein, Baartman, Buboltz, Sonnichsen & Solomon (2008) aimed to establish the existing positive factors in the lives of 18 juvenile males living in a low-security correctional facility to determine approaches that foster resiliency. This study yielded findings of both internal and external resilient factors. Internal resilient factors in the program included building positive identity and having future expectations. Each of the adolescent males expressed qualities that integrated in a positive self-concept. Although few boys believed they excelled in academics, they were all able to find areas in which they excelled.

To plan careers for their future, all of boys wanted to earn their high school diploma. External resilient factors included consistency, structure, support and good relationships between the adults in their lives. If parents and teachers have a positive relationship with students, this will influence the teenager, equipping them to perform better in the school setting (Huitt, 2002).

**A school climate’s role in enhancing academic resiliency of ELLs**

President of Resiliency in Action, Nan Henderson (2007), M.S.W., has written extensively about the impact that schools can have on fostering academic resiliency, not just in ELLs but also in all students attending urban schools throughout the country who experience “risk factors” that can prevent them from thriving in the classroom. Researchers such as Benard 1991, 1993; Henderson, 2007; Milstein, 1996 and Wang, Haertel, and Walberg, 1995have paidconsiderable attention to the role that schools can play in fostering academic resilience and have formulated theoretical models of how schools may foster resiliency in students**.** Henderson (2007) developed the model of a resiliency wheel which she describes as, “a synthesis of the environmental protective conditions that research indicates everyone can benefit from having in their lives.” (Henderson, 2007, p.10). The wheel serves as a primary organizational rubric for helping in the fostering of resilience in students. The wheel is divided into six sections which include the essential environmental protective conditions. They are: 1. Providing care and support, 2. Setting high but realistic expectations for success, 3. Providing opportunities for meaningful contribution to others, 4. Increasing positive bonds and connections, 5. Setting and maintaining clear boundaries, and 6. Developing needed life skills. (Henderson, 2007, p. 10). My own version of the resiliency wheel is depicted below in the form of a circle graph that contains the six essential sections and attempts to emphasize that they can all play equal roles in the enhancement of resilience.

Henderson says research indicates that a positive school climate can play a big role in resiliency-building. She describes a positive school climate as one where there are:

* “Feelings of safety
* Supportive relationships within school
* Engagement and empowerment of students as valued members and resources of the school community
* Clear rules and boundaries that are understood by all students and staff…” (p.39).

Stover ( 2005) states that good and healthy school climate is the key to academic success in urban schools…”a school’s climate is probably the best predictor of whether a school will have high achievement, more so than socioeconomic status of students or the school’s past level of achievement.” (Stover, 2005, p.1)

Perkins (2006) describes the effects that a positive school climate can have on students attending urban schools. According to this research, schools with a positive school climate have:

* Higher student achievement
* Higher morale among students and teachers
* More reflective practice among teachers
* Fewer student drop-outs
* Reduced violence and
* Better community relation and
* Increased institutional pride. (Perkins, 2006; Bryant & Kelly, 2006, p.ii)

Swanson & Spencer (1991) say there are a number of ways schools can enhance the resiliency process.

1. Educators should increase access to academically challenging programs
2. Forge alliances between schools, churches, organizations and businesses
3. Increase funding for early childhood programs
4. Increase parental involvement.
5. Have heterogeneous grouping rather than tracking by ability

Update technological equipment

**Effects of cultural pluralism on resiliency**

A respect for the home cultures of the ELL Latino population is believed to play an important role in their academic achievement. (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns, and Jung,2007; Lazar, 2006; Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992). According to Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns, and Jung (2007) support for cultural pluralism seems to be especially important for the academic performance, aspirations, and self-expectations of minority students. These researchers also found that support for pluralism can moderate the impact of poverty on students’ academic performance and motivation and that gaps between students from low-income families and those from more affluent families are significantly smaller in schools that have higher levels of support for cultural pluralism. (Brand, Felner, Seitsinger, Burns & Jung, 2007).

Research indicates that when teachers use their students’ life experiences and culture in their teaching, the message that is sent to the students is that their lives and the lives of their families not only matter, but are a valuable and essential part of the classroom learning.

Bartolome (1994) uses the terms “humanizing pedagogy” to describe teaching that "values the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers (page 248)."

A collaborative project conducted in 1992 between classroom teachers and anthropologists (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992) claimed that by capitalizing on the knowledge that exists in students’ homes based on culture, skills, social activities, etc, (funds of knowledge) teachers can create the types of lessons that will be engaging and interesting to students and that will far exceed the quality of the standard disconnected lessons that exist in schools. Efforts to create engagement and connection to lessons like this one are crucial when it comes to the fostering of academic resilience because they provide students with the necessary motivation to learn and they also create opportunities for students to feel accepted and valued in terms of their culture and language. Researchers in these funds of knowledge study focused on students from Mexican backgrounds living in Tucson, Arizona and spent long hours visiting the students in their homes with their families. Delpit (2005) says the following about the importance of being open to learn from and of using the culture of their students and their families in their lessons. Teachers ‘‘must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness’’ (p. 47).

**Conclusion**

The teachers and the schools of Latino ELLs need to have an awareness of the many social, academic, social and psychological hardships and adversities these students face. This awareness can help schools leaders act with more empathy and care but also with much more resourcefulness when it comes to trying to meet these students’ varied needs. Teachers and schools that serve large populations of ELLs need to learn about the research findings of people like Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez (1992) who found that by capitalizing on the knowledge that exists in these students’ homes based on culture, skills, and social activities , they can create the types of lessons that will help foster their academic resilience. These types of lesson can help motivate students to learn because they can create opportunities for engagement and also for students to feel accepted and valued. Bartolome (1994) uses the terms “humanizing pedagogy” to describe teaching that "values the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers (p. 248)."

Schools should seek the help of resiliency experts, like Nan Henderson M.S.W, when attempting to create a positive school climate that addresses the needs of students who are considered at risk of school failure, like ELLs and many others who also face a great deal of adversity while in school and as they transition from one grade to the next. A school climate that enhances the academic resiliency of students will include mechanics and tools that will promote: feelings of safety, supportive relationships, student empowerment, and clear rules and boundaries.

As a teacher who is preparing to undertake research involving ELLs and academic resiliency, I definitely keep this research in mind. I also believe that these resiliency promoting practices can help “all” students, especially those who are of minority backgrounds and come from poverty. Through my own future research, I hope to learn through the students’ voices themselves, what they perceive are the “protective factors” that help them succeed and as a result learn even more about what schools, educators and families can do to help them reach academic success. The subject of my research interest will attempt to discover a new glimmer of good, and of hope in midst of a somber and dark education era associated with finger pointing and blame, failing schools and failing children. The same people currently being blamed for student failure can and in many cases are already playing the most important role in helping these students succeed.

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